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C O N F I D E N T I A L DJIBOUTI 000581

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF AND AF/E

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [IZ](#) [DJ](#)

SUBJECT: FOREIGN MINISTER AND MINISTER OF COOPERATION OFFER
REASSURANCES ON ISSUE OF IRAQ

Classified By: AMBASSADOR MARGUERITA D. RAGSDALE.
REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (C) Minister of Foreign Affairs Ali Abdi Farah, and Minister of Cooperation within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), Mohamoud Ali Youssef, both drew Ambassador aside April 15, on the margins of an emergency meeting with heads of diplomatic missions on the subject of the flood disaster in Djibouti, to apologize -- and to reassure her -- in light of negative statements made the day prior by the President of Djibouti's National Assembly, Idriss Arnaoud Ali, on coalition Iraq policy. Both ministers stated that the National Assembly President's remarks did not reflect the official policy of Djibouti.

¶2. (C) The controversial remarks were made in a speech by Idriss Arnaoud Ali during the opening ceremony April 14 of the National Assembly's first ordinary parliamentary session for the 5th Legislature. In attendance had been the Prime Minister of Djibouti, Dileita Mohamed Dileita, cabinet members, heads of diplomatic missions and international organizations accredited to Djibouti and the 65 members of Djibouti's National Assembly.

¶3. (U) The National Assembly President's remarks, in our translation from French, were as follows: "The difficult situation prevailing today in Iraq preoccupies us a great deal. A widespread confrontation is being placed against Iraqis by the coalition forces. The latest, far from bringing the Iraqi people peace, prosperity and democracy, so much promised and so much touted, is bringing on the contrary death, misery, suffering and domination. Moreover, over the course of the past week, this war has reached its highest climax. We deplore the several hundred deaths, especially civilian victims, whose only offense is having reclaimed their national sovereignty. This situation must not endure, because it is all about innocent persons, women, children, who aspire only to live simply, in their own homes, in their country, and completely free. We have the obligation to awaken consciences and to decry this lack of respect for human rights. The National Assembly condemns without reservation all attacks on the sovereignty of Iraq, asks forces of the coalition to evacuate this country, and to leave the Iraqi people free to choose their own destiny."

¶4. (C) The Minister of Foreign Affairs told the Ambassador that the statements "had not been cleared" by the President and do not reflect official Djiboutian policy on Iraq. Ambassador responded that she had been concerned because the remarks were harsh and imbalanced. The Minister agreed and repeated that the remarks do not reflect policy. A few minutes later, MFA Minister of Cooperation Youssef repeated the Foreign Minister's apology to Ambassador and advised her that he had personally chided the National Assembly President after they were made. He continued that Idriss had been responding to the audience for which the remarks were tailored and had not meant to imply that they were official policy.

¶5. (C) Comment: There were actually two disturbing aspects of the speeches given on the occasion in question: (1) the remarks on Iraq by Idriss Arnaoud Ali; and (2) the remarks on foreign country "partnerships" with Djibouti, made by Prime Minister Dileita. Dileita failed to mention the United States, and cited only France, China, the Arab world, Iran and India in a discussion of "cooperation partnerships" now and in the future for Djibouti. The oversight of the U.S., and especially the humanitarian projects of CJTF-HOA, were vigorously raised by Ambassador with both Ministers. It may indeed have been a question of the intended audience, in this context, but the need for officials to obfuscate may be as telling as their subsequent need to apologize. End comment.
RAGSDALE